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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a program at Henderson State University, Arizona, that provides interventions for at-risk college students in an effort to keep them in higher education. The Office of Retention provides a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation students. Students in the program submit weekly Academic Assistance Program Reports detailing activities the student has completed to be a more successful student. The student meets with the Counseling Center, the student's advisor, and with each current professor three times during the semester. The Individual Academic Assistance Work program includes activities designed to help the individual raise his or her grade point average. Self-assessment is encouraged through a personal record of efforts made to raise the student's grade point average. The document contains: (1) suggestions for academic assistance participants; (2) a weekly report sheet; (3) a statement of understanding for probation students; (4) a tracking sheet for the retention office; and (5) a form letter to the registrar's office requesting information about a student. (KS)

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Co-Presenter: Georgine Steinmiller
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Retention of At-Risk Students in Higher Education

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Retention of At-Risk Students in Higher Education

Literature addressing at risk students abounds on the school level; we see concern for students staying in school. On the college level, similar concern has been expressed. What is of importance is to have implementation of retention concepts in place for at-risk students in higher education.

Students in higher education do benefit from retention efforts. What has been observed is that secondary school students who receive a solid core education are better prepared for higher education than secondary students who do not receive a solid core. Further, rural education often means that a complete college preparatory secondary education is not always possible. Many schools do not have the depth of facilities and faculty to fill out that solid core. Also many rural students become first generation college students who have to rely on university services rather than family experience for a sense of direction.

Specific retention concepts have been applied in programs for higher education students. This paper looks at specific interventions used in such a retention program.

The Office of Retention was established to provide a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, ASSET assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation

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students. Students are encouraged to contact the office for information and assistance.

Academic Assistance Program Reports are sheets submitted on a weekly basis by the student that detail the activities the student does to be a more successful student. This contact with the Retention Office allows students a semester-long opportunity to stay in touch with the office as they work to raise their grade point. The Retention Office is a clearing house and contact point for the student/faculty interaction. The Academic Assistance Program has a number of interventions that are reported on the sheet.

The students schedule and keep three appointments during the semester with the Counseling Center to discuss matters such as careers, job prospects, and personal concerns. Choosing a major and finding a sense of purpose are motivational tools that help retain students.

The student has three conferences with each current professor. These conferences focus on the course content, note taking, assignments, and tests. The professor initials or signs the appropriate space on the weekly report sheet. The conferences are ideally conducted at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. This is a very important opportunity to connect the professor with the student.

A minimum of three conferences per semester are scheduled and kept with the student's advisor at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. Students with sophomore or higher standing take an unofficial copy of the most recent transcript to the advising session. Advisors sign in the appropriate place on the report sheet. This advisor conference offsets the problem where too often students do not make effective use of advisor skill and availability.

Individual Academic Assistance Work includes activities custom fit to help the individual raise his or her grade point. Students may use the University Library, computers centers and tutorial programs. Commuters especially record study times at home. Study

groups are encouraged as are professor-initiated activities.

Self-Assessment is encouraged through a personal record of efforts made to raise Grade Point Average such as tests taken, successes, problems. Students report on absences, and how they have made up the work. Students estimate grades in each class that they are taking as well as overall trends.

Questions are referred to The Retention Office, as well as requests for tutorial support. The office has an open door that allows all students an opportunity to discuss their academic careers. The opportunity is available; the student needs to make use of the opportunity.

This retention program can be transferred to other academic settings. Any Retention program could make use of this set of standard operating procedures that assist in retention. The whole purpose of the program is to increase the sophistication of the student and facilitate the student's best use of the educational experience.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE PARTICIPANTS

I. Office of Retention:

Located on the first floor of Womack Hall room 103A, the Retention Office provides a wide range of academic assistance services including summer freshman orientation, asset assessment for non-traditional students, general education audits, career exploration, academic advising, absentee monitoring, and academic assistance for probation students. Students are encouraged to contact the office for information and assistance.

II. Academic Assistance Program Reports:

Each week the student delivers to Womack Hall 103A a report sheet detailing the activities that have been completed. This contact with the Retention Office allows the student a semester-long opportunity to raise their grade point.

III. Academic Assistance Program Activities:

A. The student should schedule and keep two appointments during the semester with the Counseling Center, Womack Hall room 111, to discuss matters such as careers, job prospects, and personal concerns.

B. The student should have two conferences with each current professor. These conferences should focus on the course content, note taking, assignments, and tests. The professor should initial or sign the appropriate space on the weekly report sheet. The conferences would ideally be at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester.

C. A minimum of three conferences per semester should be scheduled and kept with the student's advisor at the beginning, at six weeks, and toward the end of the semester. Students with sophomore or higher standing should take an unofficial copy of the most recent transcript to the advising session. Advisors should sign in the appropriate place on the report sheet.

D. Individual Academic Assistance Work:
Students should do a variety of activities all custom fit to help the individual raise his or her grade point: Huie Library, computers in Evans 114, tutoral programs, etc. Commuters may record study times at home.

E. Self-Assessment:
Personal record of efforts made to raise Grade Point Average: Tests taken, successes, problems.

IV. Refer questions to our office, as well as requests for tutoral support: Henderson State University, Retention Office, Womack Hall 103A, extension 3136.

REPORT#_____

ID#_____

HENDERSON STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF RETENTION
ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
WEEKLY REPORT SHEET

(Return one report sheet to Womack Hall 103A every week of the semester.)

Name _____ Date of Report _____

_____Need conference with Dr. Steinmiller
_____Do not need a conference at this time

Activities:

A. Visit Counseling Center Womack Hall regarding motivation, personal, career for a total of two visits per semester.

Session #_____ Signature of Counselor_____

B. Conference with Professor in _____
(subject)

1. Beginning of semester. Signature of Professor_____
2. 6 weeks grade report. Signature of Professor_____
3. End of term. Signature of Professor_____

(minimum of three conferences for each course)

C. Advisor conference (minimum of three per semester)

1. Beginning of semester. Signature of Advisor_____
2. 6 weeks grade report. Signature of Advisor_____
3. End of term. Signature of Advisor_____

D. Individual academic assistance programs: Huie Library, Evans 114, Tutorial programs, etc.

date _____ time in _____ time out _____

E. Self-Assessment: Use this space to specify success or problems you have experienced this week.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

ID # _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

TELEPHONE _____

MAJOR _____

ADVISOR _____

As a student on probation, I understand that I must participate in an Academic Assistance Program as set forth in the University Catalog. Accordingly, I affirm my willingness to participate in this program designed to improve my chances of academic success. I will comply with the academic program prescribed for me by the Director of the Office of Retention; attend all classes; work in the Learning Lab and/or any other activities appropriate to help me reach my goal of academic independence.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

RETENTION OFFICE RESEARCH CHECKLIST
STUDENT ACADEMIC STATUS

I. RESEARCH

_____Student Name:
_____Social Security Number:
_____How did name come to office attention?
_____Date
_____Current Schedule
_____Working Transcript
_____Get address, phone etc data from computer/student book
_____Check to see if on probation

_____Yes
_____No

_____Student Support Services

_____Yes
_____No

_____Housing
_____Financial Aid
_____

I. ACTION:

_____Send see-me letter
_____Contact Advisor
_____Contact Professors

_____Grades
_____Attendance

_____Contact Registrar
_____Contact Dr. Clark
_____Contact Dr. Anderson
_____

III. REPORT

_____To person initiating
_____Advisor
_____Professors
_____Dr. Clark
_____Dr. Anderson
_____Tom Gattin
_____

TO: Registrar's Office

FROM: Office of Retention

DATE: _____

RE: _____

Name: _____

SS# : _____

We are working with the above named student and request your assistance regarding the following:

____ Transcript (We need a working copy for counseling.)

____ Entrance Test Grades (current ACT, SAT, ASSET)

____ Needs Review of Transcript by Registrar in reference to the following:

- ____ Grade Point Average
- ____ Probation
- ____ Suspension
- ____ Repeated Course / 60-90 rule
- ____ Graduation
- ____

____ Correct Advisor

____ Change Advisor

____ New Advising Folder

____